

School Committee Curriculum Subcommittee

Thursday, September 29, 2016

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room, Town Hall

Curriculum Subcommittee Members Present: Barbara Scotto (Chairman), Helen Charlupski, and Susan Wolf Ditkoff.

Other School Committee Members Present: Rebecca Stone.

Staff Present: Andrew Bott, Nicole Gittens, Ben Lummis, Lesley Ryan-Miller, Amy Martin, Victoria Ching, and Robin Coyne.

1) Review of District MCAS Results

Mr. Lummis presented the Public Schools of Brookline MCAS Proficiency Rates 2011-2016 (Attachment A). He reviewed charts that showed Brookline K-8 Schools and Brookline High School MCAS ELA, Math and Science Proficiency for all students, by race/ethnicity, for students with disabilities, for English Language Learner (ELL) students, and by economic status.

Mr. Lummis stated that the administration is developing a systematic and programmatic approach to how to use data to understand issues and make decisions. They will be focusing on disaggregating the MCAS data, which has been shared with principals and all school leadership (with names removed).

School Committee Questions and Comments:

Have there been changes to test content or practice over the past five years? (No fundamental shift, but have heard, anecdotally, that the test has become more complex; the results do not include the PARCC and PARCC-like questions, so they are comparable; the test will likely be very different this spring and will set a new benchmark so we will have to use internal measures for the next two years).

When would we have expected our focus on the achievement gap to be reflected in the results? (Narrowed the gap, but the results have flatlined since 2011.)

Can we disaggregate the multi-racial data? (Yes, the administration will provide this.)

Has the Science test become more difficult? (The State does not release the test questions; the State has not made a policy decision to make the test more difficult; could compare our trend to the State trend.)

Discussed the need to address the relatively low Proficiency Rates for African American students. In previous years, in Math, African American students from non-low-income households still did worse than White and Asian students from low-income households. Addressing this disparity is a priority and requires analysis and discussion of how we can improve our models and practice. This will come up during budget development.

Members felt strongly that the various achievement gaps are not acceptable, and that we may have to shift some resources within the budget to begin to deal with it. At the same time, we wanted to emphasize that the aim of what we are doing is not to shift the scores, but to improve student learning.

Discussed how the administration is supporting targeting instruction and efforts to shift the culture regarding use of data. Lesson planning and practice need to be tailored to meet the skill needs of individual students. We have been getting an increasing number of data requests.

The State stopped releasing specificity about the questions because it was more expensive. We don't have standardized end of unit assessments. Literacy instruction needs to be embedded into early childhood education (K-2). We want to develop a culture where people feel comfortable sharing and engaging with the data.

The committee was clear that we need advice and help from our new administration about identifying and changing the structural racism in the system that leads to these results.

2) Subcommittee Planning for FY 2017

The Subcommittee discussed the presentations of School Improvement reports to see if there were better ways to present the work that would reach a wider audience. The presentations are really the only way that many School Committee members know what is happening in the schools. In general, the Subcommittee felt that the presentations were very helpful. Two suggestions were made to help School Committee members get a picture of what is happening in the schools. One was to shadow a principal for a day; another was to attend a School Council meeting at each of the various schools, but these would not necessarily be substitutes for the presentations. Deputy Superintendent Gittens will discuss this question of the presentations with the principals to see what ideas they have.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.